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Russian Studies in China: Transformation of Paradigm

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Abstract

Russian studies are the important part of area studies in Chinese science. In 21st century the research of Russia has played the great role in People's Republic of China. The Chinese scholars attempted to determine the role of the collapse of the USSR and the appearance of new state the Russian Federation for their country. The modern Russian studies in China have been oriented to the needs of the Chinese foreign policy and the ideology of the ruling Communist Party of China. The objects of the contemporary Russian studies in China are the two interconnecting themes: the one is the history of Russia-China relations and its current situation; the other is the Russian history and current affairs. In this paper we attempt to find the Chinese interpretation of Russia foreign policy from Soviet period to Putin's era. We use the open sources: papers, monographies, official web-sites of the two main research centres of Russian studies: the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS) and the Institute of Russia, East Europe and Central Asia of CASS – to conclude that the Chinese researches of Russian studies reflect the core of the Chinese government position.

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1. Introduction

This article discusses the Chinese researches of Russia in the 1990s - 2000s. They reflect the sphere of international relations, geopolitics, various aspects of economics and world history from a regional perspective. It doesn't include most of the works on culture, geography, religion of Russia. Modern Russian studies in China serves the needs of the foreign policy of the Chinese state and the ideology of the ruling Communist Party of China (Galenovich, 2011). Chinese scholars give their own interpretation to any event in the history of Russia. That's why the main objective of our research is to identify the main areas of contemporary Chinese Russian studies.

The Russian scholars don't pay more attention to foreign Russian Studies. There are some researchers who mainly consider the problem of the Russia image in the European science - Shtan'ko M.A. (2013), Trubnikova N.V. (2007, 2005) or American science - Ageeva V.V. (2014). The most famous scholar of Russian Studies in China is doctor Galenovich J.V., Senior Fellow of the Institute of Far East (2010, 2007). Unfortunately, the works on Russian economy, culture, linguistics stay outside the research interests of Galenovich J.V. Also we should mention the collective monograph "Foreign Russian studies", edited by Bezborodov, in which the main directions

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of Russian studies briefly discussed in different countries around the world, including in China (2013). Among the foreign experts may be noted Kan A. (2011), Pate A.K. (2011), Stenferr R. (2012). Thus, in contemporary Russian science there is a definite lack of research studies on the works of foreign Russian scholars.

2. The First Period of Russian Studies in China (1990s)

History of the Russian Studies development in contemporary China can be divided into several stages:

1. The first phase, 1949 - 1965. (After the foundation of the People's Republic of China to the beginning of the "cultural revolution"). The Russian Studies in China was only formed. During this period there were the first attempts to research, as well as the definition of regional specialization (Savkovich, 2012).

2. The second stage, 1965 - the first half of the 1990s. That period had characterized by the ravages of the "cultural revolution" in the whole Chinese science, including historical. That phase is divided into the period of almost complete cessation of Soviet Studies and the period of gradual recovery of Soviet Studies. In the 1980s there were made the new attempts to return to the previously problems, which were especially necessary to establish all kinds of relations with the USSR. The collapse of the Soviet Union was caused as reversals (for a reassessment of the events and the ideological content of foreign policy, etc.), and the emergence of new researchers (Savkovich, 2012).

3. The third phase, from the mid-1990s to the present. That period was characterized by undulating increasing the quantity and the quality of Russian Studies in China. The same trend is for the dynamics of research structures.

The Chinese scholars paid more attention to the economic, political and ideological construction of the new state, which was generally corresponded to the challenges of China development. The prospects of Russia economy were studied in detail. The Chinese side expressed interest in establishing a regional school of cross-border research in Xinjiang.

Since 1992 the parts of the research institutions and universities have continued to work on the establishment of specialized laboratories and / or research institutes for the Russian Studies. These scientific structures contributed to the emergence of a large number of young researchers who have started to deal with the problems of Russia in various aspects. The basis for the researches was the problem of contemporary international relations and the study of Marxism. The different kinds of research conferences were began to held, which included the Russian Studies.

In the 1990s the books were extremely rare and they were produced mainly in two leading publishing press: Institute of Russia, Central Asia and Eastern Europe, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences Publishing House and Publishing House of Current political issues. The first one had formed the stream line of the Russian Studies, the second one had published a wide range of authors and translated works of Western scholars. Subsequently, on the base of the Institute of Russia the annual reports on Russia development were published ("Yellow Book") (2013).

The most well-known researcher of the Institute was Professor Xing Guangcheng, deputy director and then director of the Institute of Russia, Central Asia and Eastern Europe. Xing Guangcheng research interests include a study of the problems of the USSR and then contemporary Russia (2006).

In general, by the beginning of the 2000s there were several trends in the development of Russian Studies:

1. The emergence of a large number of new research centres on Russia;
2. Increasing the number of scientific publications and dissertation research at various levels;
3. Expanding the perspective of research specialization centres on individual issues within the research field;
4. Improving the quality of researches using the latest scientific methods and mature theoretical apparatus.

3. The Second Phase of Russian Studies in China (2000s)

Since the beginning of the 2000s there are new research centres. We should pay special attention to two centres in Fudan University (Shanghai), which provide high-level researches on the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). Among the new research centres and structures created in the 2000s there can name the following:

- Research Center for Contemporary International Relations (one of the research areas - Russia, 2002);
- Research Center for Russia and Central Asia, Fudan University and Research Center of SCO, Fudan University, Shanghai (2005) (Savkovich, 2012).

As noted above, the works of the 2000s were more diverse. We can carry out the main topic of Russian Studies researches: historical works, researches of Russia-China, Russian political and security sectors, the economic works and humanitarian theme.

The subject of modern Russian Studies in China is the two interrelated themes:

1. the history of relations between Russia and China and their modern character;
2. the history and current situation in Russia.

In both cases the authors consider the domestic and foreign policy; they pay more attention to the ideological component. All Russian Studies scientists grouped into two organizations: Chinese Society of studying the history of relations between China and Russia and China Association for Research on Russia, Eastern Europe and Central Asia.

The key issue of modern Russian Studies in China is the interpretation of the causes of the Soviet collapse. In 2006 there was released the documentary book "We need to exercise prudence and to take precautionary measures in advance. Historical lessons of the death of the CPSU", the author is the leading expert on Russia, Vice-President of Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS) Lee Shenmin (2007). Also Lee Shenmin with a group of Chinese experts on Russia Studies held large researches on the history and current situation of the Russian state, and they published the research results in several scientific journals. This was the first large-scale attempt in the history of Chinese Russian studies not only to reflect the historical path of Russia, but also to draw lessons for China. Also these works translated the official position of the Chinese leadership, the CPC and a these point of view is "ideologically correct".

In 2007 the book "The wind of history. Scientists estimate that China's collapse of the USSR and the history of the Soviet Union ", edited by Lee Shenmin was published.

In general, the meaning of all the book articles reflected the idea that the events of 1991 and 1993 were errors, the population of modern Russia and part of the country's leadership realized that errors and understood that they "should prevent the collapse of the USSR, pity about the order, which was under Stalin, want to live again under the protection of a powerful state ..." (Galenovich, 2011).

In 2007 the book "The Yellow Book of world socialism. 2006: Research report based on tracking (development process and state) of world socialism" was published in Beijing (2006). In each case the author had a clear position and made noticeable parallels with similar events in China.

Another direction of the Chinese experts is the study of the relationship between the CPSU and the CPC. In these works the CPSU appears as a "center party ", which strongly imposed its wrong ideology to the CPC.

The contemporary Russian Studies in China paid more attention to studying Russian leaders of the Soviet era, "Yeltsin era", "Medvedev - Putin system". Analyzing the period of Boris Yeltsin, Chinese scientists show only the negative aspects of its policies, while Putin and Medvedev were presented from the positive side.

4. Conclusion

Summing up the works of Chinese researchers on Russian Studies in the 2000s we can note the following things:

1. Significantly increasing the number of works on the Russian Studies in new established research structures. Parts of specialized studies were written for "internal use", and the results of these studies were not published. The number of publications for the general reader is also increased, these publications are characterized with ideologically elaborated position, are emphasized the wrong way of Russia development in the 1990s in contrast to the Chinese way.

2. Establishing and development of scientific contacts and academic exchanges with Russia. In this regard, the representatives of the newly established Chinese centres of Russian Studies were very active. Chinese research centres invited international experts and representatives of various Russian structures, organized international conferences and forums.

As a result, by the end of the 2000s Russian direction of Chinese researches has changed seriously. The reason lies in the development of the education and science system of the PRC, as well as their priority development in a regional context. Because between China and Russia by the end of 2000s all problems (border problem, some other security issues) were solved, cooperation was carried out in new areas (economy, humanitarian cooperation, etc.). Also the factor of relatively economic and political stability in the countries played a great role. In fact, Russian Studies in China of the early 1990s and late 2000s cannot be compared in size, volume and quality of the final results.

However it should be mentioned that despite the large amount of researches on Russia in China, only a part of the work is available. The main theme in articles and monographs is the problems of Russian history in the twentieth century and the relations between Russia and China, on the second place there are the theme of the development of economic cooperation. However, the historical, political and economic works have a common drawback - they are largely conjectural and have mainly applied result. They are aimed at showing the challenges facing China's domestic and foreign policy, and to suggest the way of solving Chinese problems.

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